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**Joint Statement by Commerce Secretary Don Evans and
U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick**

WASHINGTON - Commerce Secretary Don Evans and United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick issued the following joint statement on the introduction today of a Trade Promotion Authority bill by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA):

“We greatly appreciate Chairman Thomas’ leadership in developing a bill with Democrats and Republicans to grant the President U.S. Trade Promotion Authority this year. In an effort to address long-standing differences, he and his colleagues have worked hard to put forward a number of creative ideas. This bill should allow the Congress to move forward quickly in a cooperative fashion to grant the President vitally needed trade negotiating authority, and we will work with the Congress to support this effort.

“This action could not be more timely. Even the introduction of this bill sends an important signal. Trade can be an engine for international economic recovery and help build confidence in markets. We are only five weeks away from a meeting to launch a new round of trade negotiations in the WTO to open markets around the world. We are only months away from completing two free trade agreements in Latin America and Asia. We are making progress on a Free Trade Agreement for all the Americas. And other countries, especially in the developing world, are looking for America’s leadership on trade and economic growth.

“Many respected leaders, such as Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, have joined the President in a bipartisan call for American leadership on trade. Many opinion leaders, cabinet officials from both parties, and seven presidents of liberal and conservative think tanks, have called upon the Congress to grant the President trade negotiating authority at this time.

“We will work closely with the Congress throughout the legislative process to ensure that the President has the authority to promote U.S. economic leadership, help invigorate the global economy, and negotiate the best deals for American farmers, businesses, workers, and consumers.”

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